Comparing Intermediary Organizations’ Use of Research Evidence in Advocacy

Sofia Bahena, Ed.D.
Assessing the Impacts of Engaged Research and Its Use
AGCI Workshop | October 4, 2023
Comparing Research Use

• Education-specific advocacy organizations based in Texas
• Set to begin in December 2023, with key focus on the 89th legislative session (2025)
Research Questions

What types of research evidence and strategies are used by three intermediary organizations in Texas to advocate for equitable education policy?

– Of these, which (or combo of each) do policymakers view as most effective?

- Academic Research
- District—level data
- Co-produced research*
Working Hypothesis

Does providing state policymakers with localized, contextualized research evidence generated by community voices improve an organization’s successful advocacy efforts?
Texas House Bill 5 (2013)

Perry Signs High School Curriculum, Testing Bill

Gov. Rick Perry signed House Bill 5 on Monday, ending weeks of speculation that he might veto the high-profile education legislation that adjusts high school graduation standards.

BY MORGAN SMITH  JUNE 10, 2013  2 PM CENTRAL

Gov. Rick Perry after signing House Bill 5, an education reform bill, before a crowd in the Governor’s Reception Room on June 10, 2013. © Rob Daemmrich
Key Curriculum Changes

4x4

English
- English I
- English II
- English III
- English IV

Math
- Algebra I
- Algebra II
- Geometry
- 4th Course

Science
- Biology
- Chemistry
- Physics
- Lab-based course

Social Studies
- World History
- World Geography
- US History
- US Government/Econ

Endorsements

- Multidisciplinary
- STEM
- Public Service
- Business & Industry
- Arts & Humanities
Past Findings

**AIR** found that student outcomes under the 4x4 plan showed improvement over time in college readiness, high school graduation rates, college completion, and earnings (Mellor, et al., 2015)

**E3 Alliance** found that, under 4x4, more students were taking higher level math courses than earlier cohorts; mastery of higher-level math courses was associated with positive student outcomes; and a smaller income gap in persistence rates at the highest levels of math mastery (Wiseman, et al., 2015)
Policy-Research Gap

Fort Worth Star-Telegram

Despite new state law, algebra II still a requirement for admission at most Texas colleges and universities

BY AAMENA AHMED - THE TEXAS TRIBUNE
MARCH 07, 2014 6:58 PM

Though a new law removes algebra II as a core requirement for a high school diploma, many Texas universities say they will not change their admissions standards to drop the advanced math course anytime soon.

Instead, universities will likely continue to raise the threshold for new applicants,
Response to HB5

Algebra II Fight Moves From Texas Capitol to Education Board

The 15-member State Board of Education may decide to make algebra II a requirement for all students to receive a high school diploma — despite the wishes of the state Legislature.

BY MORGAN SMITH   NOV. 20, 2013   12 PM CENTRAL

Gov. Rick Perry after signing House Bill 5, an education reform bill, before a crowd in the Governor’s Reception Room on June 10,
Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA)
Bahena: ‘Our children could get lost’ – RGV parents gather to discuss HB5

By Sofia Bahena - June 4, 2016  1713  0
“Our children could get lost”

“After listening to different stories of our communities… and having personal experience, we feared that our children could get lost… that, at the end of four years, they would not be ready to enter college. This concerned us as a community group. So, we decided to conduct a survey that would give us information about the understanding in the community of HB5.”

Lourdes Flores
President of ARISE Support Center
Chair of the RGV-EVN Education Working Group
Bilingual Community Survey (2017)

Equal Voice-Rio Grande Valley & Education Working Group Survey Key Findings

- More than 1,600 parents surveyed
- Parents with children in 24 public schools across 30 cities in the Rio Grande Valley answered questions about the first year of Texas’ new student tracking system set up by HB5 in 2013

- 85% know little, if anything, about Texas’ graduation plans & tracking procedures
- 80% know little, if anything, about the impact of Texas’ tracking procedures on their children’s education
- 66% of parents who have a child in middle or high school do not know which graduation plan would prepare their child for a four-year university
# Policy Outcomes (2019)

River Road High School  
101 W. Mobley  
Amarillo, Texas 79108  
806-383-8867

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dean Birkes</th>
<th>Rachel Freeman</th>
<th>Janie Muncy</th>
<th>Amy Francis</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>Counselor</td>
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August 27, 2019

**Required Notification Regarding Algebra II as a High School Graduation Requirement**

A student **is not required by state law** (Texas Education Code, Section 28.025) to successfully complete Algebra II as a requirement for high school graduation. **However, there are potential consequences** to a student who does not successfully complete an Algebra II course.

A student is eligible for automatic admission to a Texas public college or university as an undergraduate student if the student earned a grade point average in the **top 10 percent** of the student's high school graduating class or in the percentage of qualified applicants that are anticipated to be offered admission to The University of Texas at Austin*, and the applicant—

- successfully completed the requirements for the distinguished level of achievement under the foundation high school
What examples of context specific, place-based engaged research tell us about research funding and assessment protocols?

FUNDING IMPLICATIONS
Timeline

- HB5: High School Curriculum Changes (2013)
- Community Survey (2015)
- SB232: Required Notification (2019)

Years:
- 2013
- 2015
- 2017
- 2019

Other:
- Mesas Comunitarias
Supporting Community-Engaged Research

Funders | IO | CBOs | Policymakers

Fdn | IDRA | USED | Legislators

Providing “strategic support”

Equal Voice Network
Making it Happen

• Survey Design
• Data Collection
  – Survey Monkey subscription
  – Distribution, Data Entry
• Data Analysis
• Write up and Distribution
  – Full report, bilingual
  – Infographic
  – Dissemination
Making it Happen

• Survey Design
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• Write up and Distribution
  – Full report, bilingual
  – Infographic
  – Dissemination

Largely completed by volunteers, with some paid CBO staff
Making it Happen

• Survey Design
• Data Collection
  – Survey Monkey subscription
  – Distribution, Data Entry
• Data Analysis
• Write up and Distribution
  – Full report, bilingual
  – Infographic
  – Dissemination

Provided by
IDRA
(Communications Director, Research Associate)
What lessons have emerged in navigating power relations between communities, intermediaries, and academics?

POWER RELATIONS
Some Things to Consider

• The role of the university (or lack thereof)
• The role of the intermediary organization
  – “providing strategic support”
• Time required to build trust
Thank you!
Looking to Next Lege Session

- Texas Legislative Education Equity Coalition (TLEEC) – formerly TLEC – is a Texas-based coalition composed of 25 advocacy organizations whose mission is to “improve the quality of public education for all children, with a focus on racial equity”.

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TLEEC Members

• Non-profits (e.g., ARISE, GI Forum, NAACP)
• Professional associations (e.g., TACHE)
• State and national advocacy groups (e.g., MALDEF, UnidosUS)
• Research think tanks (e.g., TX Center for Education Policy at UT-Austin)
• Chambers of commerce (e.g., SA Hispanic CC)
TLEEC & 2025* Session

- TLEEC intends to facilitate "community data discussions" – or another community-led data project with community members, families, and youth to identify legislative priorities
Goals and Challenges

• Goal = to study how community organizing can inform policy (and to another point how can it use or co-produce research with community)

• Challenge = policy context can be unpredictable and unwieldy; capturing "impact" or "effectiveness"